

Dunlap Reflects on Career

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By MORAG MACLACHLAN

Hanging on the wall of Diane Dunlap's office is a chain of intertwining pastel colored pieces of paper. Handwritten on each link is a memory Dunlap shared over the years with her colleague and friend, Patricia Gorman.

"Pat and I used to bring a group of seventh and eighth graders to Washington, D.C. each year and one year we attended the inauguration of George Bush [Senior]," Dunlap said. "It was one of the coldest days and we were purchasing newspapers to wrap the students' feet in to keep them warm."



Guidance Administrator
Diane Dunlap is retiring from Duxbury Public Schools. Her last day will be Jan. 31.

Dunlap has been reminiscing a lot lately as she prepares to retire from her position as guidance administrator

of Duxbury Public Schools. She has spent 22 years in the district and decided in October that she would end her career on Jan. 31. Dunlap, who married over the summer, said a desire to spend more time with her family and a shift in her role at the schools prompted her decision to leave.

"I saw myself getting wrapped up in administrative duties and moving further away from counseling," Dunlap said. "I didn't feel like I was doing the best job."

Dunlap said originally, a fifth of her time was spent doing administrative work and the majority of her time was dedicated to counseling the 140 students in her caseload. The administrative portion of her job included overseeing the high school and middle school counselors as well as a counselor at the Alden School. But Dunlap's passion was individual and college counseling.

"When a student gets up from that chair and says to me 'you made me feel so much better,' you know it's worthwhile," Dunlap said. "There was never a day that I didn't love my job. Every day had its own set of memories."

Even when students graduate from DHS, as her two daughters did, Dunlap continues to receive feedback from alumni. Dunlap said many graduates stop in and introduce her to their children. Others turn to Dunlap for career advice. She said the philosophy is "guidance for life."

"Students keep in touch through e-mail and many of my students have contacted me when they are considering applying to graduate school to become a counselor. They ask me about which school to attend and what the difference between becoming a middle school or a high school counselor is. I would set up time for them to shadow one of our counselors for a day," Dunlap said.

Dunlap first worked in the district as a psychometrist,

coming to Duxbury schools each Monday to test special education students. In January 1985, Dunlap was asked to serve as a part-time counselor to special education students. The position then became full time and Dunlap settled into what was then called Duxbury Intermediate School.

Her first taste of an administrative role came in 1989 when former superintendent Don Kennedy asked her to serve as interim assistant principal at the middle school. She then was asked to split her time as assistant to the special education director and as a high school guidance counselor.

Supt. Eileen Williams tapped Dunlap for the job of interim special education director and pupil personnel director in 1993. A year later, Dunlap became a full time guidance counselor at the high school. Four years ago, she was promoted to her current position of guidance administrator.

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-Maureen Connolly

"I love working with students. Being an administrator can take you too far from dealing directly with students. I love the counseling piece," Dunlap said.

Dunlap not only made lasting relationships with her students, she also created strong friendships with her co-workers and earned the respect of parents. She said Dr. Jim Lyng, a former director of special education, and Gorman, who was his secretary and is now the middle school's secretary, are two close friends whom she still sees regularly.

"They are amazing people and we still get together," Dunlap said.

Gorman, who made the paper chain of memories in honor of Dunlap's departure, said on Friday the students of Duxbury were always Dunlap's number one priority.

"She's a dedicated worker. She gave 22 years and believed in the system,"

Gorman said.

DHS guidance secretary Gina Moylan had previously worked with Dunlap when both held positions at the middle school.

"She is a class act and will be missed," Moylan said.

Amy Rose, a secretary in the guidance department, shared Moylan's sentiment.

"Diane is a genuine lady. She is professional and irreplaceable," Rose said.

During the last School Committee meeting held on Feb. 7, Maureen Connolly of Bowsprit Lane praised Dunlap.

"She is a great role model for students and adults. It's a sad day for Duxbury schools," Connolly said.

Williams said that the number of lives Dunlap touched is immeasurable.

"Her dedication to the students of Duxbury was unwavering. As a counselor and head of the department, she affected untold numbers of families over the years. She helped students deal with the

challenges of growing up and moving out into the world," Williams said.

She added that although she has been looking for a new guidance director since Dunlap's announcement in October, no qualified candidate has been found as of yet.

As the long chapter that is her career in Duxbury comes to an end, Dunlap promised to keep in touch and to keep her hand in counseling.

"I'm exploring private college counseling part-time," Dunlap said. "I not ready to sit in my rocking chair yet."